Shades

They are everywhere along the harbour-front,
the little cats, ears pricked, their legs
as delicate as sticks, the little feline faces
heart-shaped, rippled like sand or feathers,
big eyes flashing yellow in the dark.

They pad from place to place,
pour their shadow-bodies from the sanded wood
of the taverna’s deck onto the beach
to wrap themselves around the plastic legs
of tables, begging to be fed.

Lean down to stroke them, and you almost drown
in purring: up here we’re eating fish
or chicken, calamari, fruit,
while under us the sand is steadily lapped clean,
every last crumb, as if we’ve never lived.

Last thing, when the restaurants are closing,
the cats still slink along
under the loungers, pour themselves from deep
shadow to shadow, the whole harbour black
except for floating stars, that sudden light

beyond the jetty as the sea
bares its white teeth. The little cats
escape to sleep our human diet off in shade
almost unnoticed, almost replete.

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